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Morgan Hill Downtown Plan



Task Force
Final Recommendations
April 7, 2003

by

CANNON DESIGN GROUP

In association with
Keyser Marston Associates
David Gates & Associates

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INTRODUCTION

1980 Downtown Design Plan

In 1980, the community held a series of public workshops to address issues of downtown revitalization. From these workshops, a bold plan emerged that has created a unique downtown image for Morgan Hill along with the modest attraction of new uses and the construction of additional buildings. Many of the concepts from that process have been implemented over the past twenty-two years including the landscaping and beautification of Monterey Road, public parking areas behind the buildings fronting on Monterey Road, landscaped pedestrian linkages between the parking lots and Monterey Road, and the commuter rail station has been constructed.

Other elements of the 1980 plan were not implemented as a part of the 1984 - 1994 design development and implementation phase of the plan, but have been evaluated as a part of the Downtown Design Plan Update. These include the narrowing of Monterey Road through downtown to one lane in each direction with diagonal parking, a Third Street pedestrian mall, a pedestrian bridge over Depot Street, improvements to Llagas Creek with a small lake and new commercial development clustered around a water feature, and the creation of distinctive downtown entry features on Monterey Road.

In addition, the plan included recommendations for commercial and residential development along with public and private sector design guidelines to bring uniformity and visual harmony to the downtown area.

Plan Update Process

Recognizing the 1980 Downtown Design Plan had brought about substantial change but that it had not resulted in the level of revitalization desired and that over twenty years had passed, the Morgan Hill City Council appointed a Downtown Task Force and hired a team of professional planning, economic and urban design professionals to take a comprehensive look at the 1980 Downtown Design Plan in light of community change, continuing challenges, and new opportunities. The Task Force met over a ten month period and conducted a community-wide public workshop to obtain additional input. The resulting document includes a vision for the future, focused land use strategies, urban design improvements, and implementation strategies to guide public and private efforts.

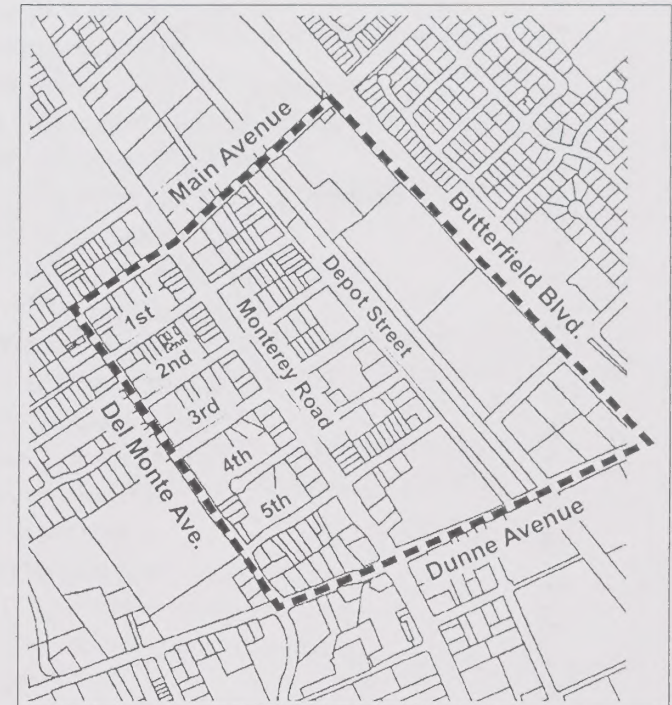


Figure 1: Downtown Boundaries

For the purposes of this document, downtown will be considered bounded by Dunne Avenue on the south, Main Street on the north, Butterfield Blvd. on the east, and Del Monte Avenue on the west.



Historic Votaw Building

Goals and Objectives for the Downtown Plan

Following discussions of downtown issues and concerns, the Task Force established the following goals and objectives to guide the Downtown Design Plan update process.

Vision

- Develop downtown as a destination for all Morgan Hill residents and visitors
- Create a dynamic, diverse, safe and accessible place with extended activity hours
- Establish a visionary and realistic land use plan for downtown
- Capture the increased economic potential of the commuter rail station
- Develop a clear vision and strategy for the Monterey Road corridor
- Provide a mix of housing near the commuter rail station to enliven downtown and provide extended hours of activity

Circulation and Parking

- Slow traffic on Monterey Road to create a safer and more pleasant downtown pedestrian environment
- Encourage non-automobile links to the downtown and the commuter rail station
- Improve and integrate Llagas Creek as a part of the downtown and the community
- Develop a workable parking resources and management program
- Improve access to parking and consolidate separate parking facilities

Urban Design

- Create a downtown Activity Focal Point
- Create a sense of visual continuity
- Improve and integrate the downtown side streets and corridors
- Maintain and enhance a character unique to Morgan Hill

Implementation

- Develop a priorities and investment implementation plan to guide future action
- Strengthen public/private partnerships for downtown implementation
- Make the most out of any potential public investments (e.g., improvements related to new courts complex)
- Strengthen the downtown owner and merchant organization

VISION

Overview

Strengthening downtown as the social and activity heart of Morgan Hill is the overriding aspiration of this plan - a place where residents from all segments of the community can meet, shop, participate in public celebrations, and share in the richness of Morgan Hill's community life. It will be a place like nowhere else - a place with its own unique scale, character and uses.

Land Use

Downtown will encourage and accommodate a wide diversity of uses serving the community. It will offer needed goods and services as well as provide a congenial home for new and unique businesses that may exist nowhere else but in Morgan Hill. It will be a village where each use has its own distinct character, and where walking from use to use is an interesting and stimulating experience.

A diversity of restaurant and entertainment uses will draw office workers to downtown during the day, and provide a rich destination for individuals and families at night and on the weekend.

Specialty retail and food stores (e.g., bakeries, wine shops and take-home gourmet meal delis) will serve commuters as well as providing other residents with a greater range of shopping choices.

New homes and apartments in and around downtown will provide support for downtown businesses.

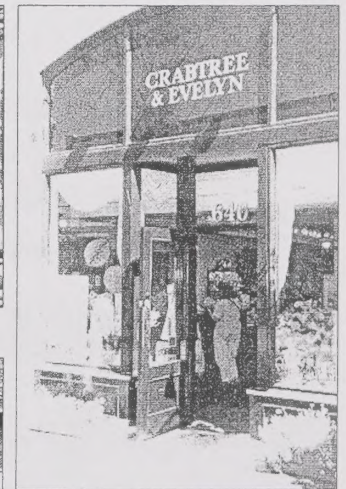
And, existing small houses will be interspersed with small businesses such as gift shops and law offices within a richly landscaped environment.



Continuity of interesting shops



Restaurants with windows on the street



Attractive storefronts



Residences converted to interesting shops and offices

Parking

Existing downtown parking lots will be improved with landscaping and lighting to provide convenient and attractive one-stop locations to leave the car while walking to several destinations along well landscaped sidewalks. Additional linkages between downtown parking lots will be created. On-street parking spaces will serve as convenient spaces for quick in-and-out stops while additional parking lots will be added over time to accommodate longer term parking needs. Shared parking by all uses will be encouraged.



Downtown Access

Pedestrian and bicycle access to downtown will become more common in the future as bicycle lanes are added to north and south Monterey Road, with links along Depot Street to the rail station. And as streets are beautified with landscaping and street furniture, walking to the downtown will be a more pleasant experience. Many will bike or walk to downtown along the edges of a beautified Llagas Creek by way of the Llagas and West Little Llagas Creek Trails connecting the downtown to the Community Park and Silveira Park.

Downtown Focal Point

Third Street will become a focus of activity and outdoor dining in downtown. Widened sidewalks with lush tree plantings on each side of the street will accommodate outdoor dining and special shops such as a produce market. Portions of the street, designed more as a plaza than a street, will be closed for special events including activities such as music and art shows. A focal point fountain near the Monterey Road end will provide a gathering place for activities and special lighting will add a festive quality to the street.



Third Street



Third Street Plaza

LAND USE

Overview

The introduction of a commuter rail station in Downtown Morgan Hill on Depot Street at Third Street has created new land use and business opportunities. Areas within a 1/4 mile radius of the station - approximately a five minute walk - are strong candidates for businesses serving the commuter population and for residential development appealing to those who wish the convenience of commuting by

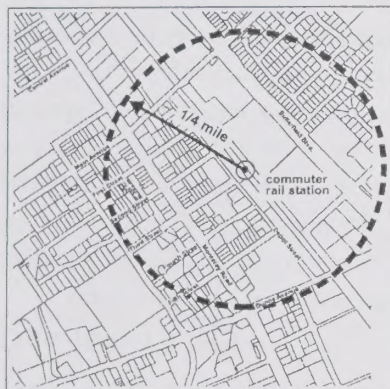


Figure 2: Commuter rail station easy-walking radius



Commuter rail station

rail without having to drive to the station. The whole of Downtown Morgan Hill is included within this easy walking distance as shown on Figure 2. Land use plans and strategies have been strongly influenced by this relationship.

In addition, there are several other strong physical and land use features of the downtown that have influenced the plan and will heavily influence private sector development decisions over the coming years. They are shown in Figure 3.

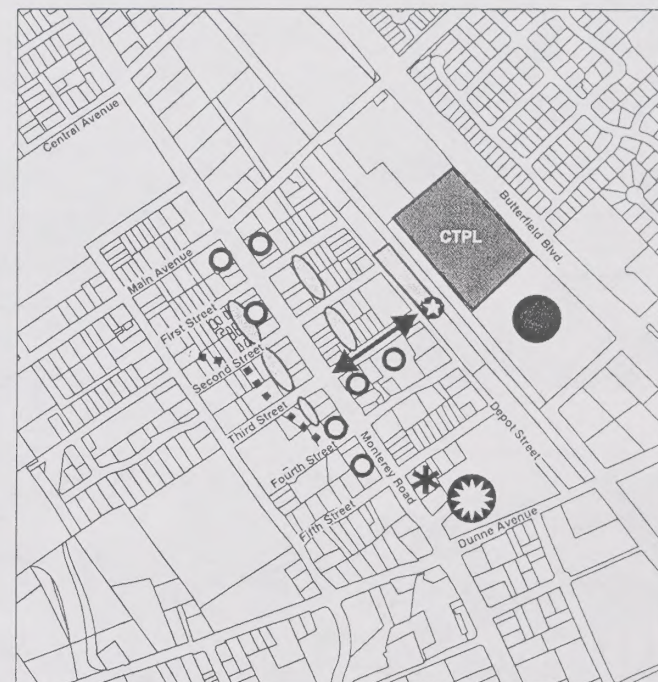


Figure 3: Important plan influences

Key

- Vacant parcels
- Parking lots
- ★ Commuter rail station
- CTPL Caltrain parking lot
- ☼ Community Center
- * Community Playhouse
- Proposed County Courts Facility
- ↔ Wide Third Street
- Llagas Creek

General Plan and Zoning

Land uses will be required to conform to both by the Morgan Hill General Plan and Zoning Code. Land use classifications generally remain the same in both documents as prior to the adoption of this plan with the exception of properties east of the railroad tracks and north of Main Avenue. These have been reclassified to categories more consistent with the opportunities of transit-oriented development. No changes are proposed to the area west of downtown on Main Avenue.

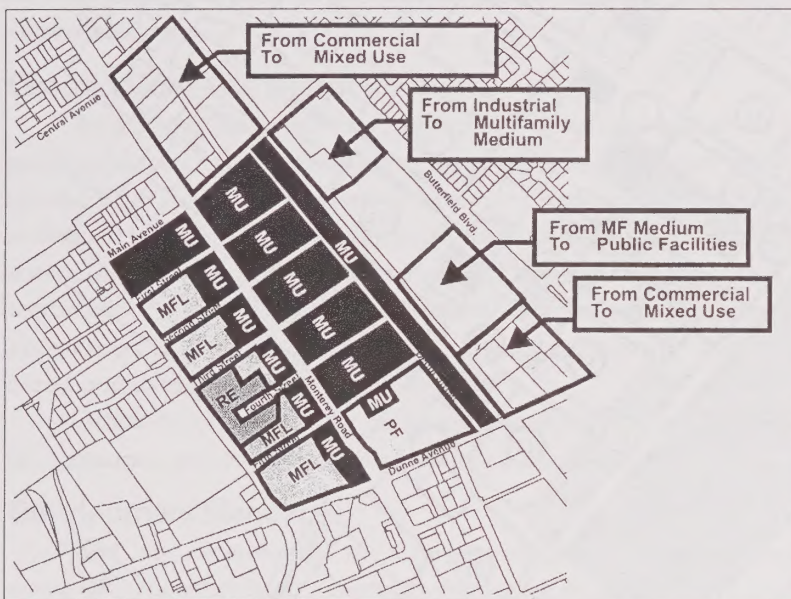


Figure 4: General Plan map

MU	Mixed Use
MFL	Multifamily Low Density
RE	Residential Estate
PF	Public Facilities

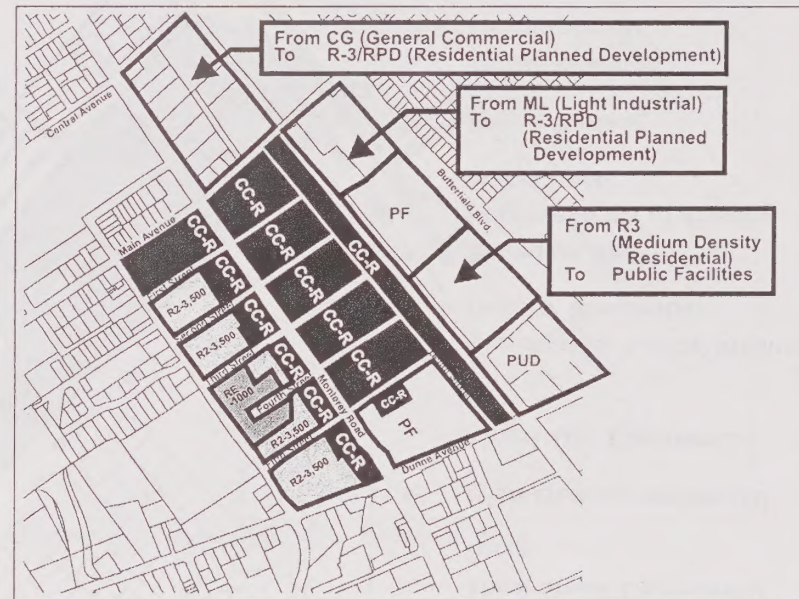


Figure 5: Zoning map

This map is generalized. Refer to official City of Morgan Hill Zoning Map for detailed zoning boundaries.

CC-R	Central Commercial, Residential District
R2 - 3,500	Medium Density Residential District
RE - 100,000	Residential Estate District
PF	Public Facilities
PUD	Planned Unit Development

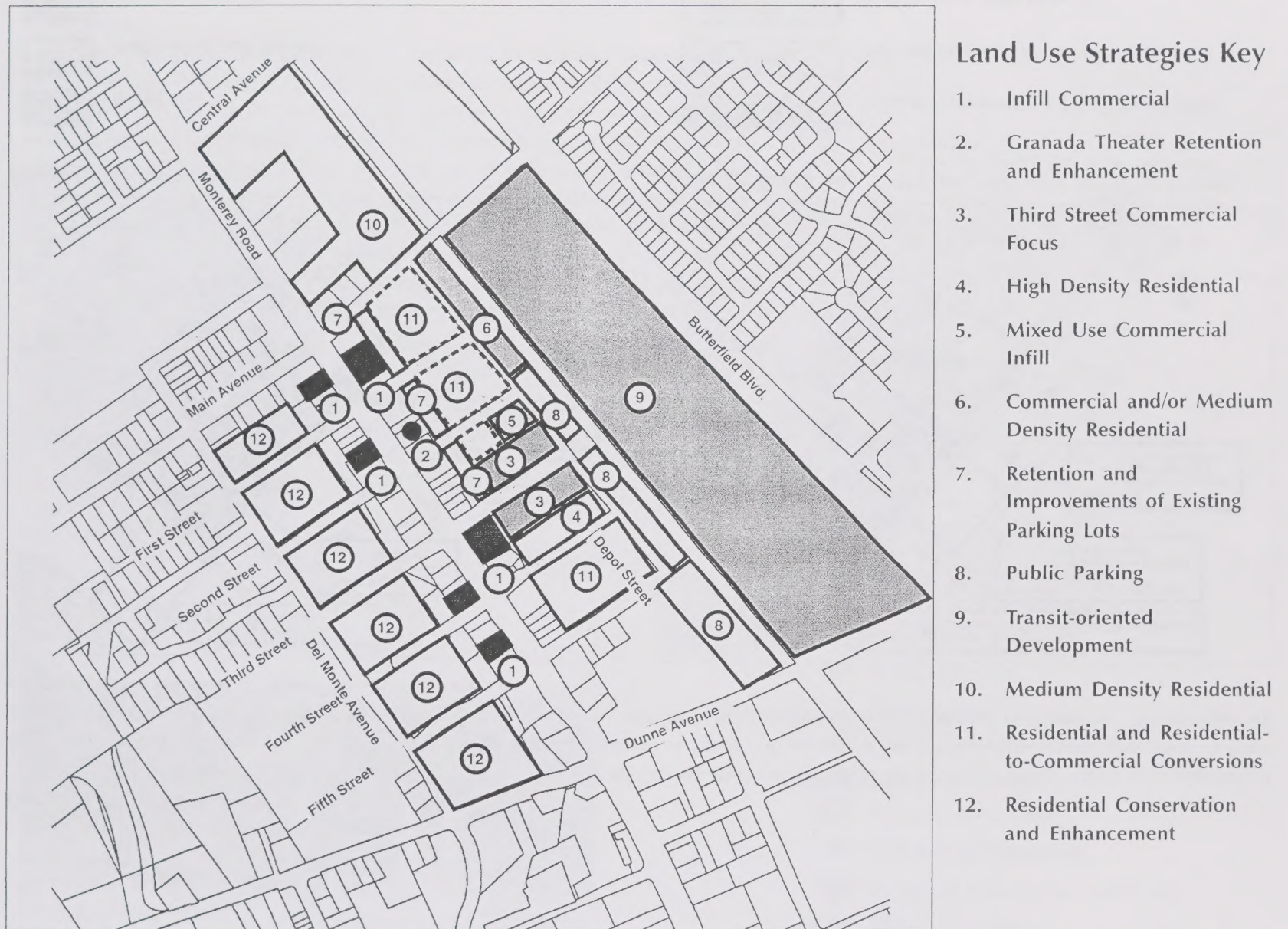


Figure 6: Land Use Strategies

new development in the area will be required to be designed to be compatible in both scale and character to the current residential nature of the area.

12. Residential Conservation and Enhancement

The cohesive residential neighborhood west of Monterey Road will be maintained. Encouragement will be given to the development of new residential units in the area on parcels currently devoted to commercial uses.

Ground Floor Use Restrictions

To enhance the pedestrian character of downtown and assist in guiding the location of businesses in support of the downtown vision, ground floor spaces on portions of Monterey Road and Third Street, as defined in Figure 7, will be restricted to retail shops, restaurant and entertainment uses, and service commercial businesses that support a continuity of display window visual interest. They include shoe repair, dry cleaners and similar uses that serve the community and the commuter population on a daily or weekly basis.

Office development may be located on second floors above retail, restaurant and commercial service uses in these areas.

Development Standards

With the exception of the Community Center, all downtown properties will either be in a currently designated residential zone or in the CC-R Zoning District which was created especially for the mixed use nature of Downtown Morgan Hill. The standards of these districts will continue to be applied with the exception that CC-R standards will be modified to allow improvements on currently developed lots by reducing the minimum lot area and width standards, and to define the measurement of maximum height to allow adequately pitched roofs in residential scale areas. However, each individual project will be carefully reviewed to ensure compatibility with the vision and intent of this plan. The design guidelines included in this document will serve to assist city staff and commissions in making that judgement.



Figure 7: Ground Floor Use Restricted Area

CIRCULATION

Overview

The street system in the downtown area is well established. However, additional studies will be prepared to determine whether any street or intersection modifications may be required. In addition, changes will be made to improve pedestrian safety, increase the visual appeal of downtown, and accommodate long term circulation improvements envisioned in the Morgan Hill General Plan.

Monterey Road

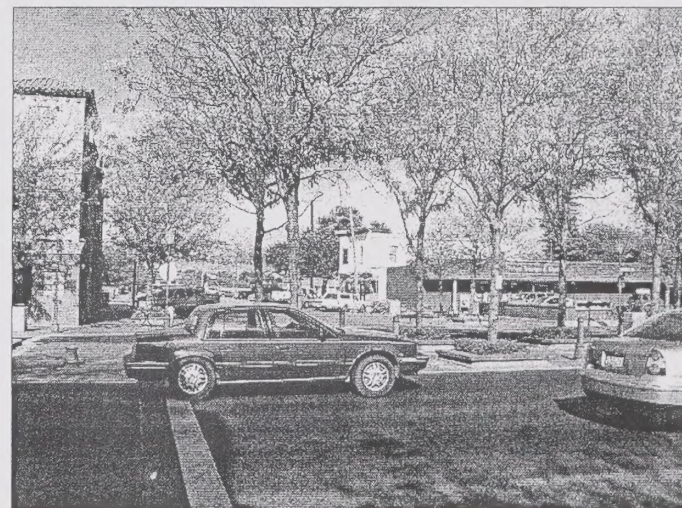
Monterey Road provides major access to downtown from both the north and the south. With four traffic lanes (two in each direction), it serves not only as a major access route to downtown, but also as a circulation route for through traffic - often serving as an alternative route to Highway 101 when traffic backs up on the freeway. By virtue of its width and large through-traffic volumes, Monterey Road often poses internal circulation conflicts within downtown while making pedestrian crossings of the street difficult and often dangerous. In addition, the perceived width of the street, traffic volumes and vehicle speeds have resulted in a physical and psychological barrier separating the downtown into two segments - one east and one west of Monterey Road.

Several construction projects have been completed or started in recent years that have, or soon will, increase overall traffic capacity in the north-south direction. Butterfield Boulevard has been completed between Cochrane Road and San Pedro Avenue, and will in the future be extended to Watsonville Road to provide an alternative route through Morgan Hill. And, Highway 101 has been widened to provide additional lanes and traffic capacity.

A strong desire exists to reduce the conflicts and barriers created by the current conditions on Monterey Road. Two approaches will be examined to achieve these objectives: consideration of reducing the number of travel lanes through downtown and the application of traffic calming measures.



Monterey Road



Third Street Pedestrian Crossing

Third Street

Third Street is wider than the other east-west streets in the downtown - possibly because of its historic linkage between the railroad and the Monterey Road when Monterey was the main highway through the community. Since the street carries very little traffic, it will be narrowed to one traffic lane in each direction with parallel parking on one side. This will allow the sidewalks on both sides of the street to be widened to accommodate outside dining, displays (e.g., produce and flowers), and additional landscaping.

The landscape improvements and the activities along the street will serve to provide a strong link between the commuter rail station on Depot Street and the uses along Monterey Road. The street will be designed to allow it to be closed off periodically for informal markets, art shows, music events, and similar community activities. More details are provided in the Urban Design section of this document.

Depot Street

Depot street will be improved with landscaping and enhanced sidewalks to serve as a strong pedestrian link between the commuter rail station and the Community Center to the south; residential areas to the north; and the Third Street entry to downtown. A widened sidewalk will be provided on the east side of the street, and bike lanes will connect the train and bus terminus with creek trails, parks, and distant residential areas.

Improvements will include enhanced landscaping at the Main Avenue intersection to provide a sense of entry to the street. More details are provided in the Urban Design section of this document.

One additional change will occur in the future. When a Dunne Avenue underpass of the railroad tracks is completed, as called for in the Morgan Hill General Plan, Depot Street will be closed between Fifth Street and Dunne Avenue. At that time, or before if warranted by traffic conditions, a study will be conducted to determine the need for a traffic signal at the Monterey Road/Fourth Street intersection.

Other Streets

Other streets between Depot Street and Del Monte Avenue will have beautification improvements including a narrowing of the street paving at corners.

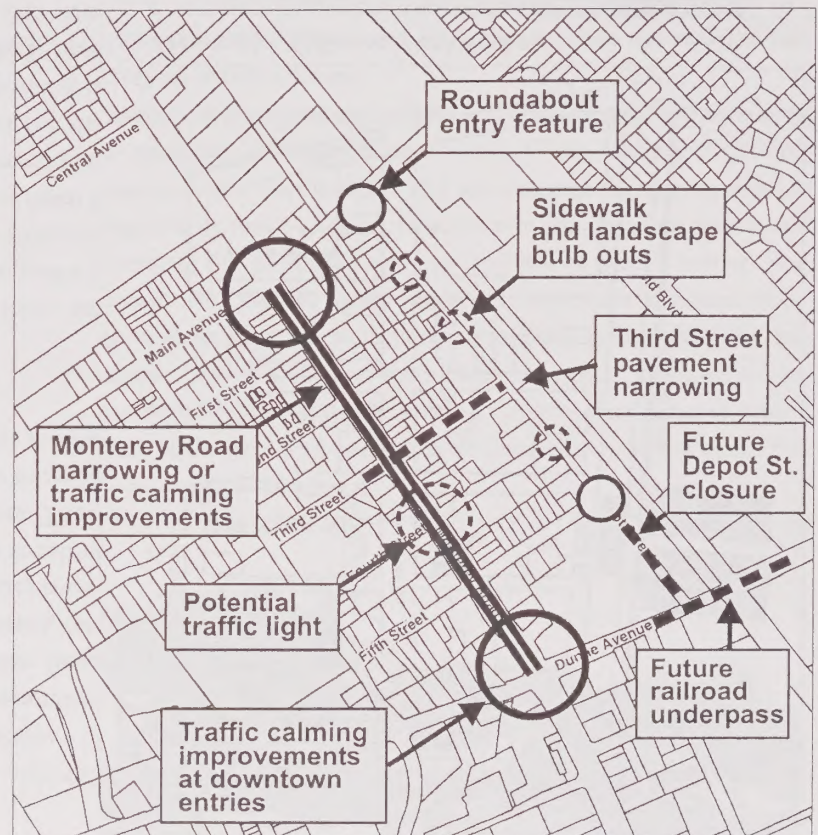


Figure 9: Street Circulation Improvements Summary

PARKING

Overview

Downtown Morgan Hill is currently served by 1120 parking spaces with 433 on-street spaces and 687 spaces located in the off-street parking lots shown in Figure 11. In addition, there are another 531 spaces in the two Caltrain commuter parking lots - 64 in the lot on Depot Street and 467 in the large lot accessible from Butterfield Boulevard. Most of the off-street parking lots are privately owned, but some are public lots by virtue of ownership or agreements with the property owners. Most of these off-street parking lots are located at the rear of parcels fronting on Monterey Road and provide convenient parking for downtown visitors. Their usability has been enhanced over time by efforts to relate contiguous lots or those in adjacent blocks so that a motorist might move easily from lot to lot in order to find a parking space.

Current Parking Utilization

While parking is often difficult to find on Monterey Road, where there are only 30 on-street curbside spaces, the overall utilization of existing downtown parking spaces is quite low. A Parking Utilization Study was conducted to inventory the use of all on-street and off-street parking spaces hourly during a typical weekday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and weekend day from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The inventory showed that the utilization of both on and off-street spaces was less than 50% except for the weekday noon hour when both slightly exceeded that figure. Generally, parking is not considered fully utilized until the utilization rate reaches 85%, at which time searching for an empty space becomes more of a problem. The Caltrain lots were not included in the hourly inventory, but were observed to also be less than fully utilized - especially the large lot east of the railroad tracks.

Future Downtown Development

There is no definitive means to accurately project future parking demand. The relative attractiveness of different uses and specific businesses to residents can have substantially different parking demand characteristics, and the time of day that different uses have their peak demand or the ability of a mix of uses to draw from the same downtown visitor in a single trip all play a role in determining the need and adequacy of downtown parking.

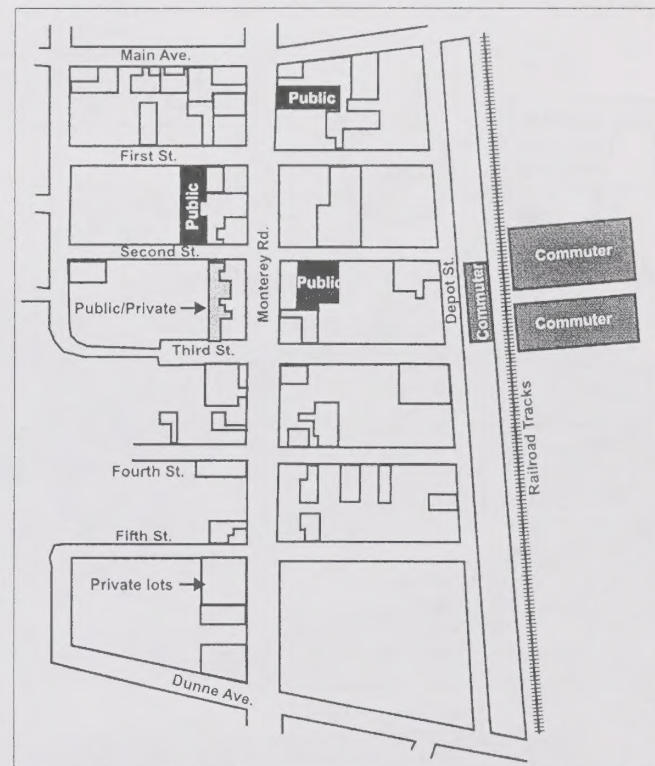
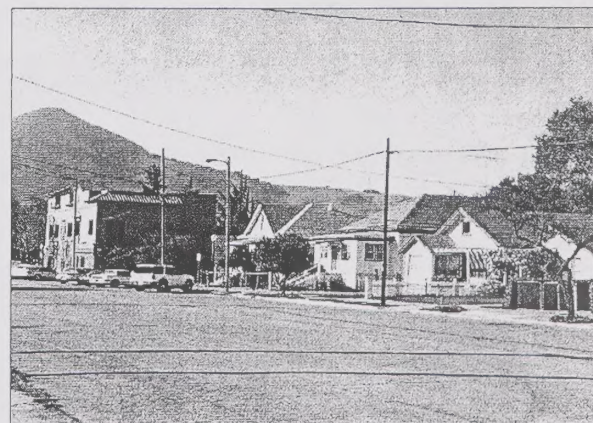


Figure 11: Off-street Parking Lots



East Third Street parking on a weekday



Figure 12: Future Parking Resources

to remove barriers and improve circulation connections between existing parking lots (e.g., the southwest corner of Monterey Road and Main Avenue.)

2. Construct a new parking lot on the west end of the Sunsweet Site

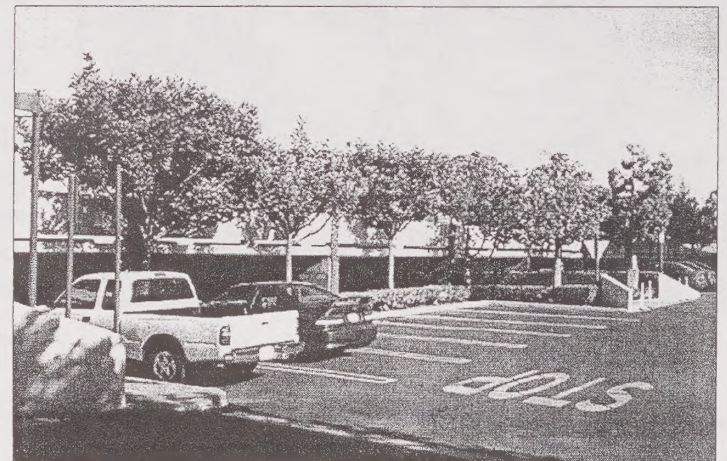
Continuing the current pattern of parking lots behind Monterey Road parcels and connecting between intersecting side streets would be expected as a part of the development plan for the

Sunsweet Site development bounded by Third Street, Depot Street and Fourth Street.

3. Add additional parking along the Depot Street Rail Corridor

Although the depth of parcels along the railroad corridor are relatively shallow, they will accommodate parking lots with diagonal parking. The area near Dunne Avenue would yield more efficient parking after the closing of Depot Street between Dunne Avenue and Fifth Street when the railroad underpass is constructed.

Initially, surface parking lots would add to the parking resources at relatively low improvement costs. When additional parking resources are required, the city will evaluate the option of adding one or more parking structures in this location versus increasing the parking supply as outlined in step 4 below. The area north of Fifth Street could accommodate a modest two-level structure with minimum visual bulk as shown in the example below. The area near Dunne Avenue, because of its potentially greater width, could accommodate a larger structure, if desired, and could jointly serve the downtown and the Community Center.



URBAN DESIGN

Overview

The urban design improvements, along with the parking program, established in the 1980 Downtown Design Plan, have done a great deal in defining downtown Morgan Hill as a unique place unlike any other downtown. They also have been instrumental in avoiding the deterioration that has occurred in so many other downtowns in California as other forms of retail and restaurant development (e.g., large box retailers and fast food franchises) have combined to change the economic and social nature of traditional downtowns.

This plan builds on those improvements, refines previously planned but unexecuted features of the 1980 plan, and adds other elements to reinforce the image and character of downtown Morgan Hill as an area with a diverse mix of uses, but an overall feeling of visual unity. In addition, many of the urban design components reflect the fact the downtown has become a significant transit hub with the opening of the commuter rail station. Improvements are intended to establish the downtown as a desirable place to shop, dine, work and live, and to provide attractive pedestrian linkages to the station from areas within downtown and from the broader community.

Photographs on this page show a few of the significant urban design improvements that have been implemented since the 1980 plan.



The Monterey Road median landscaping includes conifers as part of the concept to bring the natural feeling of Nob Hill into the downtown



Refined landscaping and bollards areas contrast with the more informal median landscaping



Street trees, attractive brick paving, and well-designed street furniture line both sides of Monterey Road

Monterey Road

There is a strong desire to reduce the physical and visual barrier of Monterey Road with regard to uses on either side and a strong need to improve pedestrian safety by slowing traffic through downtown. There are two options to accomplishing these objectives which are discussed in the Circulation section of this document. The urban design aspects of those options are outlined below.

Option #1: Monterey Road Narrowing

A reduction in the volume of traffic just passing through downtown without stopping would be beneficial to the creation of downtown as a community activity center, as a focus of retail shops and restaurants with outdoor dining, and as a place where pedestrians could move safely from one side of the street to the other. However, because Morgan Hill has limited arterial street and freeway capacity between the north and south portions of the city, a reduction of the street from two travel lanes in each direction to two cannot be undertaken lightly. As noted in the Circulation section, a traffic study would be undertaken first to establish the feasibility of a roadway narrowing. If that study suggests that narrowing is feasible from a traffic standpoint, a trial period of temporarily narrowing the street without permanent improvements may be established. Although the trial period would involve temporary improvements, it will be important that they be attractive and supportive of the desired downtown image of a pedestrian-oriented district with a strong commitment to landscaping and flowers.

This process would also allow further discussion of the most desirable changes to the street. Members of the Downtown Task Force, in their deliberations, had differing opinions concerning the relative merits of additional parking (diagonal) along the edges of the street, bike lanes running along both sides of the street, and increased sidewalk width for outdoor dining and pedestrian movement. General alternative approaches are shown on the section diagrams to the right.



Existing sidewalk and parking on Monterey Road

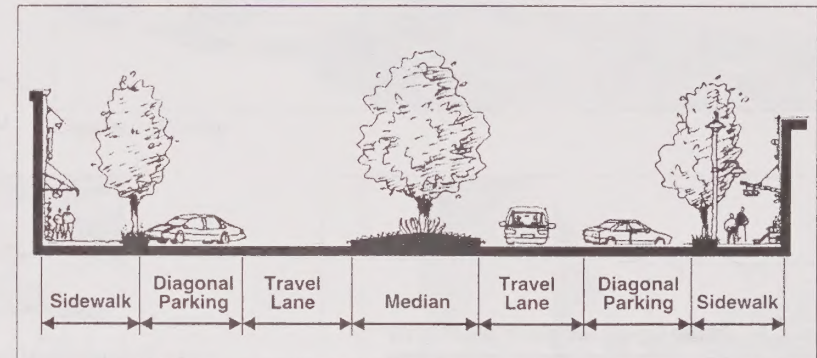


Figure 14 Monterey Road narrowing with diagonal parking

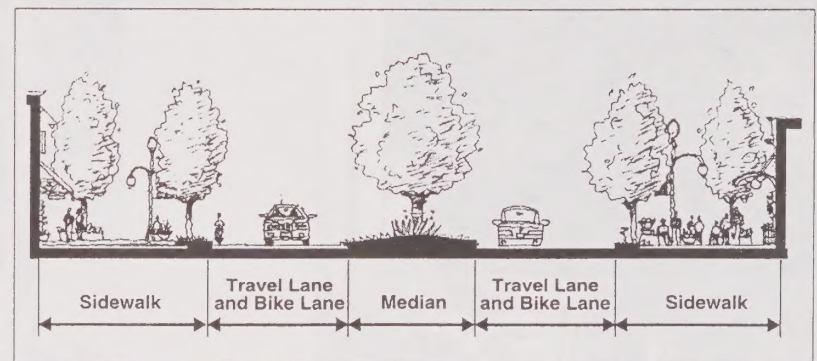


Figure 15: Monterey Road narrowing with expanded sidewalks



Identity sign option example - monument sign



Identity sign option example - freestanding sign



Additional median landscaping

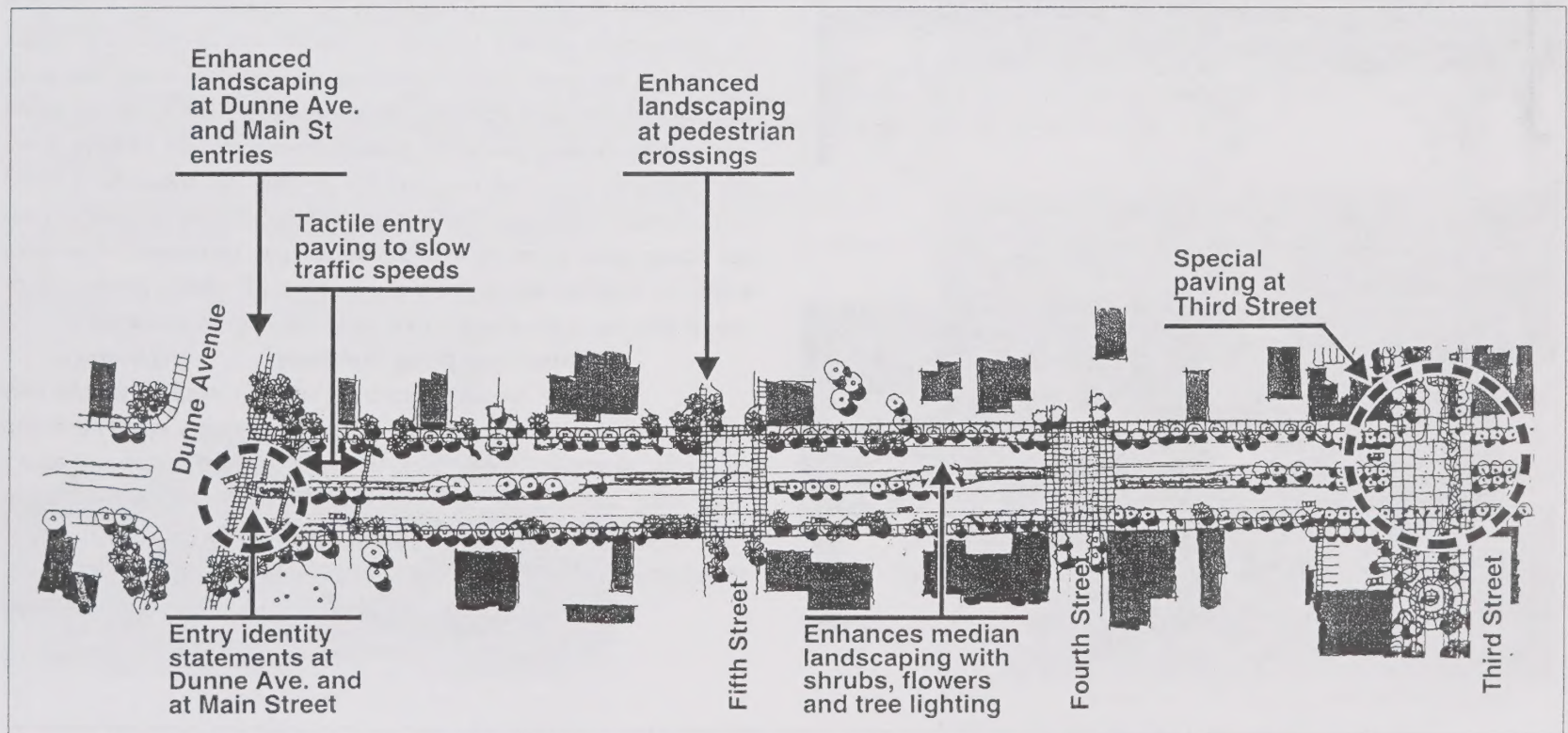


Figure 16: Monterey Road Concept Plan (Third Street to Main Street similar)

(See Appendix for larger scale fold-out plan)



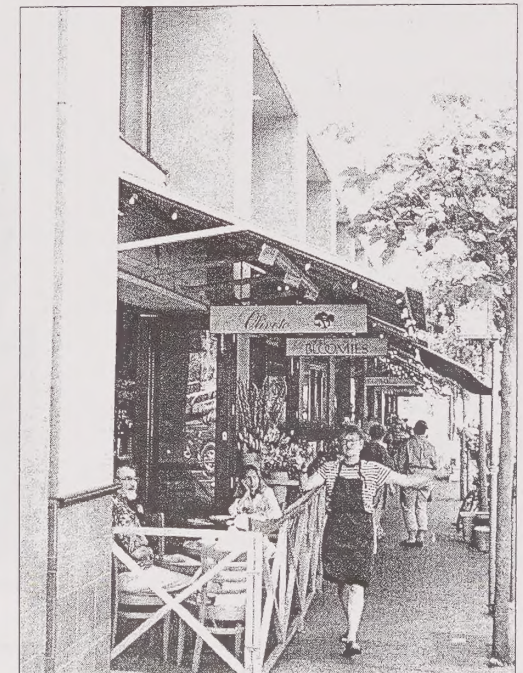
Figure 18: Third Street Concept Sketch



Outdoor Dining



Figure 19: Third Street Plaza Concept Sketch



Outdoor Dining and Shops



Figure 22: Depot Street Concept Sketch

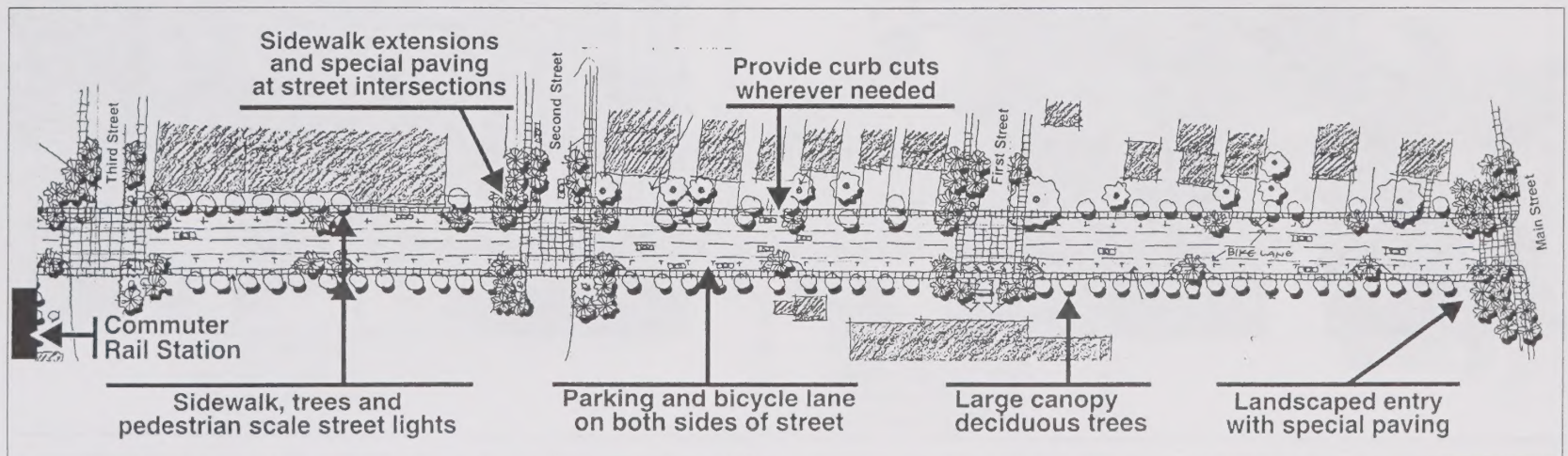


Figure 23: Depot Street from Third Street to Main Street

(See Appendix for larger fold-out plan)

Railroad Right-of-Way Landscaping

Typically, passengers traveling in trains along railroad corridors are faced with unpleasant sights of the backs of buildings, storage yards and other disorganized and often blighted conditions. To announce Downtown Morgan Hill as a special place and to buffer adjacent uses from the rail traffic, landscaping, consistent in species, height and form, will be installed along both sides of the tracks.

Historically, there were significant tree plantings along the Caltrain corridor. An example in Burlingame is shown in the photo below. Landscaping for the Morgan Hill downtown, while relatively large in scale, will be smaller and less dense than this example and more formal in character (e.g., tall, columnar poplars or similar shaped trees.)



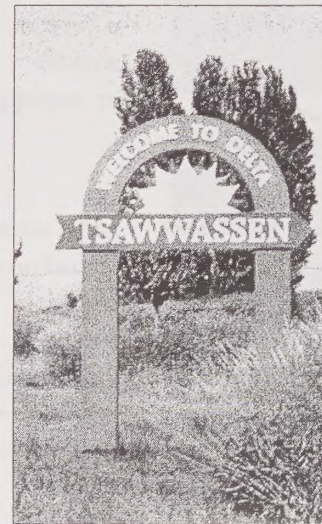
Example of Caltrain rail corridor historical landscaping

Dunne Avenue Urban Design Improvements

Over time, steps will be taken to enhance the landscaping and urban design improvements between downtown and the Dunne Avenue interchange. These might include additional trees and landscaping as well as the addition of banner poles, either to the existing street lights or to new pedestrian scaled lights. The intent is to provide a strong linkage to downtown, announce that something special lies at the other end of the street, and encourage visitors getting off at the freeway interchange to continue on downtown to take a look.

Special Signage near the Freeway

Along with the Dunne Avenue urban design improvements, a special sign or multiple signs will be designed and placed near the interchange to let visitors know that the downtown is special and it is easily reached.



Example of highway-related signage

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Overview

Although there are a wide range of building sizes and architectural styles in Downtown Morgan Hill, a sense of small town architecture still remains. The current mix of “Main Street” commercial structures along Monterey Road and modest homes on the side streets provide a great deal of visual variety along with a scale and texture that is pedestrian friendly and uniquely Morgan Hill.

It is the intent of this plan to preserve and enhance that uniqueness and pedestrian scale. The guidelines outlined in this section will be used in the review of all proposed development projects including additions and remodelings.

Basic Design Principles

These guidelines are based on the Basic Design Principles outlined below. In the event that the guidelines in this document do not directly address a specific condition, these principles will be used by city staff and commissions in making a judgement as to the appropriateness of proposed plans and architectural designs.

- #1. All buildings shall be sympathetic in form, scale, and height to adjacent structures.**

Existing buildings in downtown Morgan Hill are relatively small in scale owing to the small parcel sizes. New buildings should respect this small scale. Projects on larger or combined parcels should be broken up in form to reflect the prevailing fabric of downtown.

- #2. Buildings along Monterey Road and Third Street shall be designed in an architectural style compatible with traditional Main Street buildings.**

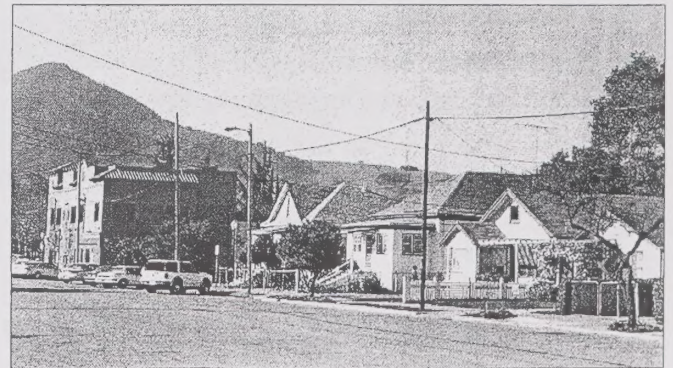
Characteristics of traditional Main Street buildings include parapets with projecting decorative cornices, large ground floor display windows, deep set upper floor windows, and decorative architectural details.



Historic Main Street style building



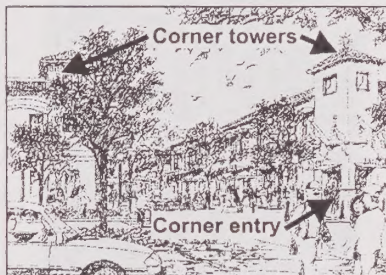
New compatible commercial structure



Small scale residential structures on side streets

A2. Provide special accent design elements for Monterey Road buildings located on street corners

Corner pedestrian entries and design elements, such as towers, are desirable at street corners to provide a visual terminus to street frontages and to provide a visual transition between Monterey Road and neighborhood side streets.



A3. Maintain a two story tall street wall on Monterey Road and Third Street

New buildings along these frontages should be at least two stories in height to maintain and enhance the density of development appropriate to the downtown area along these core streets. Structures constructed to the maximum allowable height of three stories should have the upper floor stepped back a distance of at least fifteen feet to maintain a height and scale along the streets consistent with their pedestrian orientation.



A4. Provide architectural detail to enhance the visual interest of facades

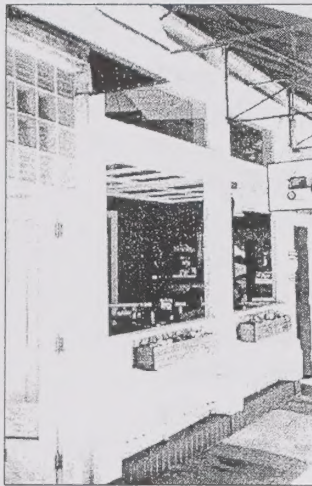
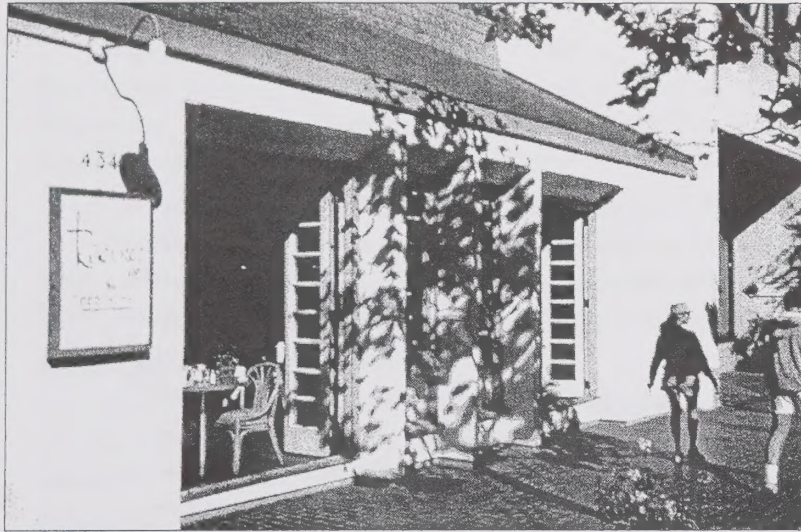
Projecting cornices with interesting detail appropriate to traditional Main Street commercial buildings should be used to establish a finished top to facade walls. Other architectural details will be expected to add visual richness to street facades. Examples include bay windows, decorative belt courses, mouldings around windows, and planter boxes with flowers under windows.



A5. Maintain transparent storefronts and public right-of-way walls

Maintain a minimum of sixty percent (60%) transparent glazing along primary store frontage up to eight feet above grade. In the example to the right $A+B+C+D$ must equal at least 60% of E . Avoid blank walls over ten feet long on primary frontages and for the first fifty feet from Monterey Road and Third Street along other public streets. Avoid tinted or reflective window glass.





Restaurant operable window examples



A8. Use awnings for pedestrian protection and visual interest

Install fabric awnings on painted tubular metal frames. Avoid metal awnings and canopies or shiny fabrics. Backlit awnings that visually appear as large light sources are not consistent with the vision and character of Downtown Morgan Hill, and will not be permitted.



Generally use sloped front awnings that are visually compatible with awnings on adjacent storefronts. End panels returning to the building face are optional.

A9. Use appropriate materials

Use primarily stone, brick or stucco for facades. Avoid nontraditional materials such as wood, shingles, cultured stone, small tiles, rough finished materials, and corrugated metal.

A10. Provide off-street courtyards where possible

Courtyards that can accommodate smaller retail tenants, service commercial shops, and restaurants provide increased business opportunities and more pedestrian traffic along the street frontages. Courtyards should have good linkages and pleasant landscaped entries from the street.



B. Railroad Corridor

The parcels between Depot Street and the railroad tracks are shallow, but relatively large in area. The southernmost parcels offer the best opportunity for additional downtown parking resources. However, should they be used for other commercial or residential development, the following guidelines should be observed for the area shown in Figure 27.

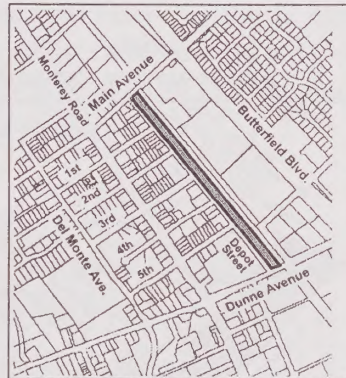


Figure 27: Railroad Corridor

- B1. Existing structures which are reflective of the history of Morgan Hill should be preserved and adapted to new uses, wherever feasible.**

This guideline applies only to the Isaacson's Feed and Grain complex near Main Avenue which has a strong tie to Morgan Hill's earlier agrarian history

- B2. New structures should be sited with setbacks of no more than fifteen feet from the Depot Street property line. Entries shall be oriented to Depot Street.**

The planned urban design improvements on Depot Street will establish a significant pedestrian walkway along the east side of Depot Street. To enhance the pedestrian qualities of the street and to activate the street, new structures should be strongly related to the street and provide visual surveillance of the pedestrian way.

- B3. On-site parking is allowed for uses in this area. However, all parking should be sited at the back of the parcel, adjacent to the rail tracks.**

The strong pedestrian orientation of the street when the planned urban design improvements are completed requires that pedestrian-vehicular conflicts be minimized.

- B4. Depot Street heights should be limited to two stories. Any third story space should be integrated into the roof form of the structure.**

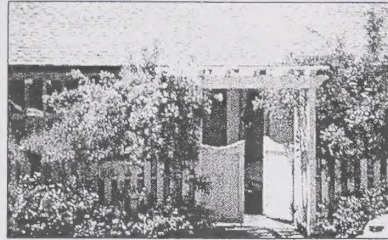
This area will be visually more related to the neighborhood areas than to the Monterey Road and Third Street areas. Its shallow depth would make full three story structures seem overly tall and out of character with the downtown.

- B5. Landscaping should be provided along the railroad tracks to visually buffer the back of the development from the view of train passengers.**

While more major landscaping along the rail corridor may be provided at some point in the future, its relatively low priority may not allow implementation prior to new development along the corridor. Developers of property in this area should consult with the city and install buffer landscaping that is compatible with long term urban design plans.

C5. Provide residential front and side setback landscaping

Typical residential landscaping should be provided with lawns, ground cover, shrubbery and flowers. Wood picket fencing is encouraged as are trellis entries at pedestrian walkways. Any existing driveways should be removed, and hardscape materials limited to no more than twenty-five percent of front and side setbacks.



D. Butterfield Boulevard Area

The relatively large parcels fronting on Butterfield are different from most other downtown parcels. They can accommodate much larger buildings and significant amounts of development. Both conditions present a challenge to ensure development that is compatible with the small scale character of downtown. In addition, the location of these parcels in close proximity to the commuter rail station presents special opportunities for strong pedestrian linkages to the station and increased development densities. The guidelines below apply to the area shown in Figure 29, including the proposed County Courts facility.

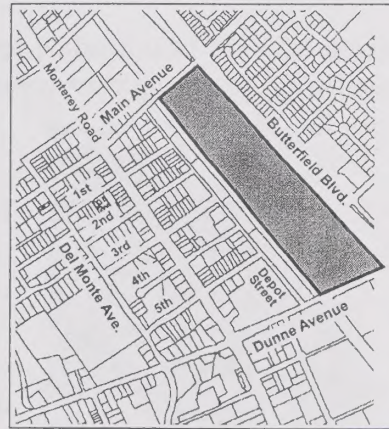


Figure 29: Butterfield Blvd. Parcels

D1. Orient buildings to street frontages

Buildings should be placed close to the street. Setbacks should be in the order of fifteen to twenty-five feet for residential and commercial uses, and building entries should be oriented to street fronts or internal pedestrian ways. The intent is to provide lively street frontages that define attractive pedestrian paths to the commuter rail station and downtown.

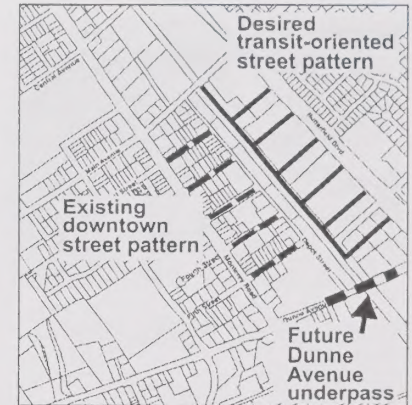


Figure 30: Transit-oriented Street Pattern

Internal street systems should be used to provide access to buildings and parking. Efforts should be made to reflect the existing downtown street grid, wherever possible, as shown in Figure 30.

All parcels shall be considered as Planned Unit Developments (PUD), requiring a unified development plan for the area surrounding the parcel.

D2. Limit the amount of street frontage devoted to parking

Parking should not be located between buildings and the primary street frontages. Where parking lots front on a street, they should be screened with substantial landscaping and low walls to reinforce the pedestrian paths through the site.

Signage Guidelines

Overview

Business signs can have a significant impact on the image and character of a downtown. Interesting and well designed signs that reflect the diversity of uses and the personality of individual businesses attract customers and add a visual richness to the streets. Downtown signs should be different from those in other parts of the city by virtue of downtown's strong pedestrian orientation.

General Sign Guidelines

GS1. Allowed signage types

Signs in the downtown will be limited to the following types which are illustrated to the right and described on the following pages.

- Wall Signs
- Awning Signs
- Window Signs
- Projecting Signs
- Hanging Signs
- Freestanding Signs
- Plaque Signs
- Business Directional Signs
- Monument Signs (Butterfield Blvd. Area and Community Center only)

GS2. Prohibited signage types

The following signs are not appropriate for downtown:

- Movable Letter Signs (except for cinemas and performing arts facilities)
- Electronic Signs
- Roof-mounted Signs
- Cloth, paper or fabric signs hung from the building or placed in windows except for Temporary Signs allowed under the City of Morgan Hill Sign Code

GS3. Maximum allowed sign area

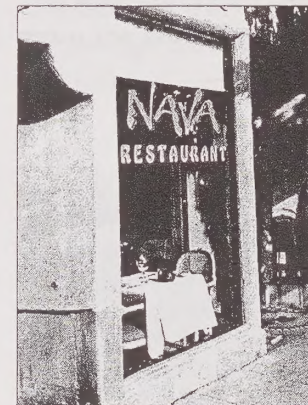
Sign area is limited to one square foot per linear foot of building frontage along Monterey Road, Third Street and Depot Street, and to one-half square foot per linear foot of frontage on other streets. This allowance is less than allowed in auto-oriented areas of Morgan Hill.



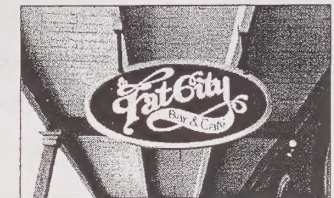
Awning Sign



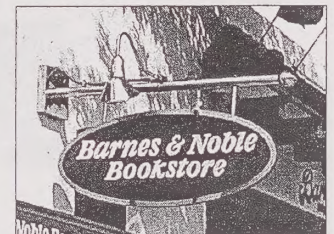
Wall Sign



Window Sign



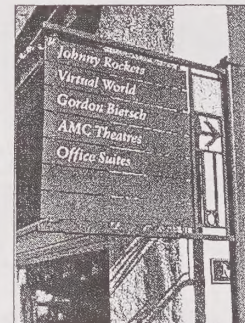
Hanging Sign



Projecting Sign



Freestanding Sign



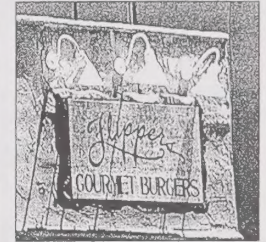
Business Directional Sign

GS10. Use simple and symmetrical sign shapes

Geometrical shapes such as rectangles, squares, circles, ovals and triangles are visually stable shapes which help focus attention on the sign message. These should be used in almost all cases. Combinations of geometric shapes will also generally produce a good sign shape.

**GS11. Sign Lighting**

Use direct illumination (spot lights) for wall, projecting, and free-standing signs rather than internally illuminated letters or cabinets. Light luminaires should be well designed fixtures with shielding to avoid light glare. Examples of good sign lighting are shown below.

**GS12. Limit the size of neighborhood streets signage**

Signs in these residential character areas need to be sensitive to the scale of the buildings. They should be smaller and fewer in number (i.e., one-half square foot of sign area per linear foot of parcel frontage.) Types should be limited to freestanding, hanging and plaque signs.



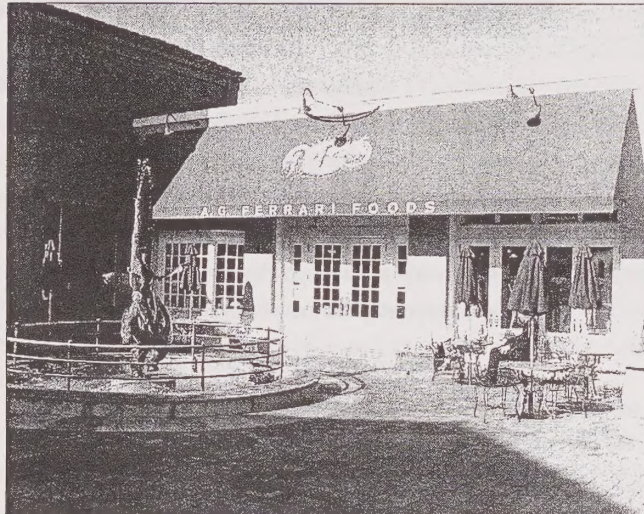
Awning Signs

AS1. Sign location

Awning signs may be located either on the vertical valance at the front of the awning or on the sloped front awning face.

AS2. Sign size

Letters and logos should be limited to 2/3 of the vertical valance height or 8 inches, whichever is less and to 2/3 of the width of the valance. Text or graphics placed on the awning face should not exceed 15% of the sloped surface area.



Window Signs

WS1. Limit the amount of signage used

Window signs should be limited to a maximum of 25% of any individual window, and an aggregate area on no more than 10% of all ground floor windows on any building face..

WS2. Limit the size of lettering

The maximum height of letters should be 10 inches. Exceptions may be granted for the leading capital letter of text as shown in the Rockridge Cafe sign below.

WS3. Consider the use of logos and creative sign type

Graphic logos and images along with special text formats can add personality and interest to window signs. Some examples are shown below.

WS4. Use high quality materials and application methods

Limit window sign materials to the following:

- Paint or vinyl film applied directly to the inside face of the window
- Tubular neon suspended behind the window glass
- Wood or metal panels with applied lettering
- Paper signs placed in windows are not allowed.



Hanging Signs

HS1. Use high quality materials

Use wood or metal and avoid shiny plastic or fabric. Finish all exposed edges. Suspend signs with metal rods, small scale chain, cable, or hooks.

HS2. Limit the number and size of hanging signs

Use no more than one hanging sign per business. Limit the maximum sign size to 3 square feet. Mount signs to provide a minimum of 8 feet clearance between the sign and the sidewalk.

HS3. Orient hanging signs to pedestrian traffic

Mount signs under awnings, bay windows or other projections with their orientation perpendicular to the building face so that they will be visible to pedestrians passing on the sidewalk. If multiple hanging signs are placed along a business frontage, they should all be mounted with their bottom edge the same distance above the sidewalk, and should be of a similar size and shape.



Freestanding Signs

FS1. Limit freestanding signs to businesses in residential scale areas

Businesses located on side neighborhood streets and the west side of Depot Street are suitable places for this type of sign. Signs of this type would be located in the front setback area.

FS1. Limit the number and area of freestanding signs

No more than one sign may be installed on any single parcel. However, more than one business may be identified on the sign so long as the type style and color are identical for the individual businesses. Signs should not



exceed 6 square feet in area, excluding the supporting structure which should be relatively small in scale. The maximum height of any sign should be 7 feet. Use wood or painted metal for supports and sign panels. Interesting icon designs are encouraged.

FS3. Provide soft and subtle lighting

Because of the mix of uses in the neighborhood areas of downtown, it is important that the signage for businesses sharing the area not intrude unnecessarily on their neighbors. Sign lighting should be limited to late afternoon hours during short daylight months and to those businesses that are open of an evening

Lighting, when needed, should be provided by small spot lights mounted either above the sign or at the ground level. Fixtures should be shielded to minimize light glare into surrounding areas. Fixtures should be well designed - standard spot lights without shades are unacceptable.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Overview

Achievement of the Downtown Morgan Hill vision will require the commitment of both public and private resources and creativity over an extended period of time. Some elements of the plan (e.g., governmental regulations changes) can be accomplished in relatively short order, and the city can earmark funding for a limited number of catalyst projects and programs over the next five to ten years. However, the bulk of the implementation activities and financial investment will be carried out by individual entrepreneurs and by interested groups like the Downtown Association over a period of years.

The implementation strategy set forth in this document focuses primarily on the steps that can be taken by the public sector to encourage and facilitate those private sector initiatives. Priorities are based on those established by the Downtown Task Force. Together the priorities and implementation tasks serve as a general road map for actions over the next five to ten years. While these are time tested as appropriate and effective tools for downtown revitalization, flexibility should be maintained to respond to special opportunities that may be presented. However, before significant changes in priorities or funding allocation are made, new opportunities will be evaluated as to their relative contribution to meeting the goals and vision set forth in this plan.

Implementation Emphasis

The following objectives will guide further public planning and implementation activities.

Land Use

- Encourage a diverse mix of uses emphasizing specialty retail, restaurant and entertainment uses
- Emphasize transit-oriented uses which do not require large amounts of on-site parking
- Rehabilitate existing downtown residential units
- Add a substantial number of residential units in or near downtown with densities in excess of ten dwelling units per acre
- Strengthen downtown through emphasis on the infill development of vacant lots along Monterey Road

- Encourage the conversion of residential uses between Monterey Road and Depot Street to small scale commercial uses and upgraded residential units.

Parking and Circulation

- Stimulate property improvements and new development through the elimination of on-site parking requirements for commercial development
- Provide for new off-street parking lots and long term parking resources management
- Facilitate strong land use, pedestrian and visual linkages between Monterey Road and the commuter rail station and the new County Courts Complex

Urban Design

- Create a Downtown Village through unified landscaping and street lights
- Make Monterey Road more pedestrian and retail friendly
- Maintain downtown's unique identity and scale with new design related to the existing scale and character
- Create visual and physical linkages to downtown with landscaping, bike paths and entry area signage

Public Actions and Assistance

- Retain existing businesses and actively recruit desirable new businesses
- Work with property owners to rehabilitate major existing buildings
- Work with property owners of undeveloped and under developed properties to bring new investment to downtown
- Push for early implementation of flood control improvements
- Encourage coordination of new development among property owners

B. Circulation

1. Railroad Pedestrian Crossing

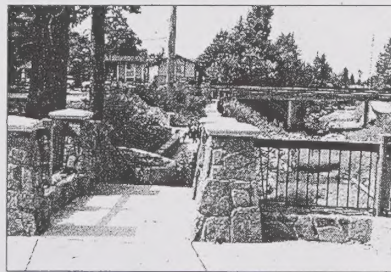
Plans are proceeding for a pedestrian crossing of the commuter rail track to allow a stronger connection between the large parking lot and future development east of the tracks and the downtown. Consideration and design study of means to visually strengthen the crossing by a formal gateway or other methods to call attention to and direct pedestrians to the crossing could assist in forging a better relationship between the two areas.

2. Llagas Creek Landscaping and Bike Path

Other public agencies are studying the alternatives for flood control improvements to Llagas Creek. Implementation of flood control improvements are crucial to the future of Downtown Morgan Hill. Currently, a large portion of downtown, including all of the Monterey Road parcels, is included in a 100 year flood zone that impairs reinvestment in existing buildings and new construction. The construction of landscape and pedestrian/bicycle improvements along with the flood control work is already partially funded by the city.



Figure 31: Downtown 100 Year Flood Zone



The city, however, needs to meet with and work closely with the other agencies - especially the Santa Clara Water District - to review alternatives for flood control, and to ensure that the final plans will allow a quality environment and trail. An example of a recently completed creek and trail project in Santa Rosa is shown above.

B3. Monterey Road Traffic Study

The concept for narrowing Monterey Road is discussed on page 18. Prior to any construction to narrow the roadway through downtown from four to two lanes, a traffic study will need to be carried out to determine its feasibility or the parameters of acceptable changes. The study will take into account recent freeway improvements and planned city improvements to the street system. As a part of the study, the advisability of a future traffic signal at Monterey Road and Fourth Street should be included.

Important policy decisions:

- Relative importance of downtown pedestrian environment and Monterey Road Corridor traffic flows

B4. Monterey Road Improvements Plan

If the narrowing of Monterey Road proves to be feasible from a traffic standpoint, studies and community input will be needed to determine the configuration of changes and the design of improvements. The narrowing of the streets could be implemented in one phase, or as outlined on page 27, a trial period of temporary narrowing could be tried. For either approach, a public information program should be implemented to involve and inform the community of the anticipated changes.

Important policy decisions:

- Traffic calming measures only or street width reduction
- If street width reduction, trial period or permanent construction

2. North and South Monterey Road Urban Design Improvements

The general parameters of streetscape improvements are described on page 36. Further planning will be needed to prepare more detailed concepts and plans.

Important policy decisions:

- *Funding mechanisms (e.g., all at once or incremental improvements; public funding or private property assessments or implementation in concert with new development)*

3. Depot Street Landscape and Urban Design Improvements

The schematic design of Depot Street landscape, paving and street light improvements are included in this downtown plan study (see page 32 and 33.) The Depot Street studies were funded by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). The MTC and other public agencies such as the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) may be potential source of funds for the implementation of the project.

Important policy decisions:

- *Implementation priority*
- *Implementation phasing (e.g., all at once or incremental related to new development)*
- *Funding mechanisms (e.g., public funding or private property assessments or development conditions of approval)*

4. Third Street Urban Design Improvements

Detailed plans will need to be prepared for the landscaping, paving, street lighting, benches and other street furniture such as trash receptacles, newspaper racks, and possibly kiosks. These plans and improvements will need to be coordinated with existing conditions along the street that may remain and with plans for new construction.

Further planning is also needed on the west side of Monterey Road.

The conceptual plans included in this plan show a continuation of the major Third Street paving as far west as Llagas Creek where a small mini-park and connection to a potential future creek trail is provided.

As a part of this more detailed design, plans and programs for the use of the space will need to be carried out to ensure that the improvements allow flexibility in the use of the space when it is closed for outside dining or special events. Possible requirements include sound systems, electrical outlets, water connections, and other features that will make use of the area possible without long setup times.

Important policy decisions:

- *Process for detailed programming and design (including future public program uses and management responsibilities)*
- *Implementation priority*
- *Implementation phasing (e.g., all at once or incremental related to new development such as south side improvements constructed with the Sunsweet Site development and north side improvements only when residential properties converted to commercial uses)*
- *Funding mechanisms (e.g., public funding or private property assessments or development conditions of approval)*
- *On-going maintenance responsibilities (e.g., City personnel versus Morgan Hill Downtown Association versus fronting businesses and property owners)*

11. Freeway-oriented Directional Signage

The location and design of an identity sign near the Dunne Avenue interchange can be included as a part of the public signage improvements task above, and could use some of the same design features of those signs.

12. Private Signage Improvements Program

Private business signage is often ordinary and unimaginative - especially if there are no inspiring examples in the area, no expressed expectation that signs should be special, and no easily identified nearby sign designers and fabricators that can make the process easier.

A program to assist business owners could improve this situation. Components of the program might include the establishment of a registry of sign designers and fabricators who would be available to assist small business owners. This could include sign design assistance or city grants, matching funds, or low interest loans to help in the design and fabrication of the signs. Another possibility would be the creation of a sample book of good signs that could assist owners in picking appropriate sign types and working with sign fabricators.

Important policy decisions:

- **City-sponsored incentives for signage upgrades**
- **Priority for funding**

13. Sign Ordinances Changes

The current sign ordinance sets aside a special section for the downtown CC-R zone, requiring compliance with the 1980 Downtown Design Plan. This section will need to be updated as will the A-Frame ordinance to address the appropriate number and location of A-frame signs.

14. County Courts Complex Coordination

Occasionally, County projects constructed within incorporated communities in California fail to take adequate care to fit the new development into the local city fabric. The complexities of building programs and the often need for rapid implementation conspire to limit adequate consultation and coordination. However, the location of the proposed Courts facility in close proximity to the unique Morgan Hill downtown should require a building complex executed with sympathy toward the vision and scale of Downtown Morgan Hill. Special attention should be given to working with County staff to ensure implementation of the site planning and design principles for the complex set forth in the "Architectural Design Guidelines for the South Santa Clara County Courthouse (February 29, 2000)" to enhance the potential for pedestrian connections to the downtown and a unique design character.

15. History Appreciation Program

Many communities have found that identification and promotion of their unique history is of benefit both to local residents and to businesses as well. One way of achieving this is to encourage, perhaps with some modest funding, the use of historic plaques to identify interesting downtown buildings in the community's history. Plaques attached to building walls or freestanding as part of the streetscape are two common methods.

16. Public Art Program

The encouragement of public art is another way that cities have found to enrich their downtown environments. Public art can be used as a part of entry identity features, integrated into the design of street furniture, included as a part of special sidewalk and street paving, or any number of other ways. Some communities fund such improvements in public areas. Others require or encourage public art as a part of private development projects.

5. Develop RDA Assistance Criteria

The removal of the requirement for providing on-site parking for new development is a major incentive for building expansion and new construction. There will be occasions, however, when desirable development may need some form of public assistance (e.g., low interest loans) to make implementation feasible. The Morgan Hill Redevelopment Agency (RDA) will be the primary source of assistance to the private sector in revitalizing the downtown area. This is in addition to the facade rehabilitation program.

However, limited resources will require that the Agency carefully evaluate every request and channel assistance to those projects that will contribute most to the realization of the vision set forth in this downtown plan. To guide the Agency's decisions and to assist property owners in understanding the city's priorities, the Agency will establish and publish criteria to guide the city's use of the limited assistance resources. The Agency's criteria will take into account the following factors:

- *Likelihood that the project will attract new retail, restaurant or entertainment uses to the downtown*
- *Ability of the project to activate the downtown with new vitality and visitors*
- *Contribution the project makes to the strengthening of the primary Monterey Road and Third Street commercial frontages*
- *Project ability to add new residential units to the downtown*
- *Degree to which the renovation of an existing building will substantially improve the exterior attractiveness of the streetscape*
- *Degree to which the project increases the critical mass of uses (e.g., two story new development versus one story infill)*
- *Relative amount of private investment that can be leveraged with public funds*
- *How well it meets the City's Business Attraction Program and Economic Development Strategy*

Important policy decisions:

- *Target levels and criteria for assistance*

F. Public Improvement Priorities

To assist in allocating resources over the coming years, the RDA will prepare cost estimates for each of the implementation tasks outlined in this document. All tasks will involve further design studies and community input. For the purpose of further planning and funding, the Downtown Task Force recommended the following priorities.

First Priority

1. Monterey Road Traffic Calming Improvements

This is a very high priority with the Morgan Hill Downtown Association and necessary to improve safety and better establish the downtown as a pedestrian-oriented district.

2. Llagas Creek Flood Control Improvements

This will be an on-going process that will take some time given the number of agencies involved and the limited funding currently available. However, until the improvements are implemented and the flood restrictions lifted on the downtown area, little new development will be possible.

3. Parking Resources Management Program

The establishment of ground rules and funding for parking related to new development will be important to stimulating positive future land use and physical changes in the downtown. Tied to this program should be the improvement of existing downtown parking lots with landscaping and lighting, land acquisition, if needed, for future downtown public parking lots.

4. Depot Street Landscape and Urban Design Improvements

Efforts should be concentrated on seeking assistance through outside funding sources. This area has a generally blighting influence on the downtown visual environment at the moment. Improvements along this street will tie the area more strongly into the rest of the downtown, encourage its use as a downtown parking resource and establish stronger linkages between the community and the commuter rail station on Depot Street.

APPENDICES

A. Downtown Plan Team

CITY OF MORGAN HILL

Downtown Task Force

Greg Sellers *Council Member, Chair*
Steve Tate *Council Member, Co-Chair*
Ralph Lyle *Planning Commissioner*
Geno Acevedo *Planning Commissioner*
Joe Burch
Russ Danielson
Bob Engles
Rocke Garcia
Laura Gonzalez-Escoto
Don Jensen
Brad Jones
Lesley Miles
Sunday Minnich
Gayle J. Murphy
Richard B. Oliver
Gayle Richter
Mark Turner

City Council

Dennis Kennedy *Mayor*
Greg Sellers *Mayor Pro Tempore*
Larry Carr
Hedy L. Chang
Steve Tate

Planning Commission

Geno Acevedo
Ralph J. Lyle
Bob Engles
Joseph Mueller
Robert J. Benich
Charles D. Weston
Robert Escobr

Staff

J. Edward Tewes *City Manager*
David Bischoff *Community Development Director*
James Rowe *Planning Manager*

Business Assistance and Housing Services Department

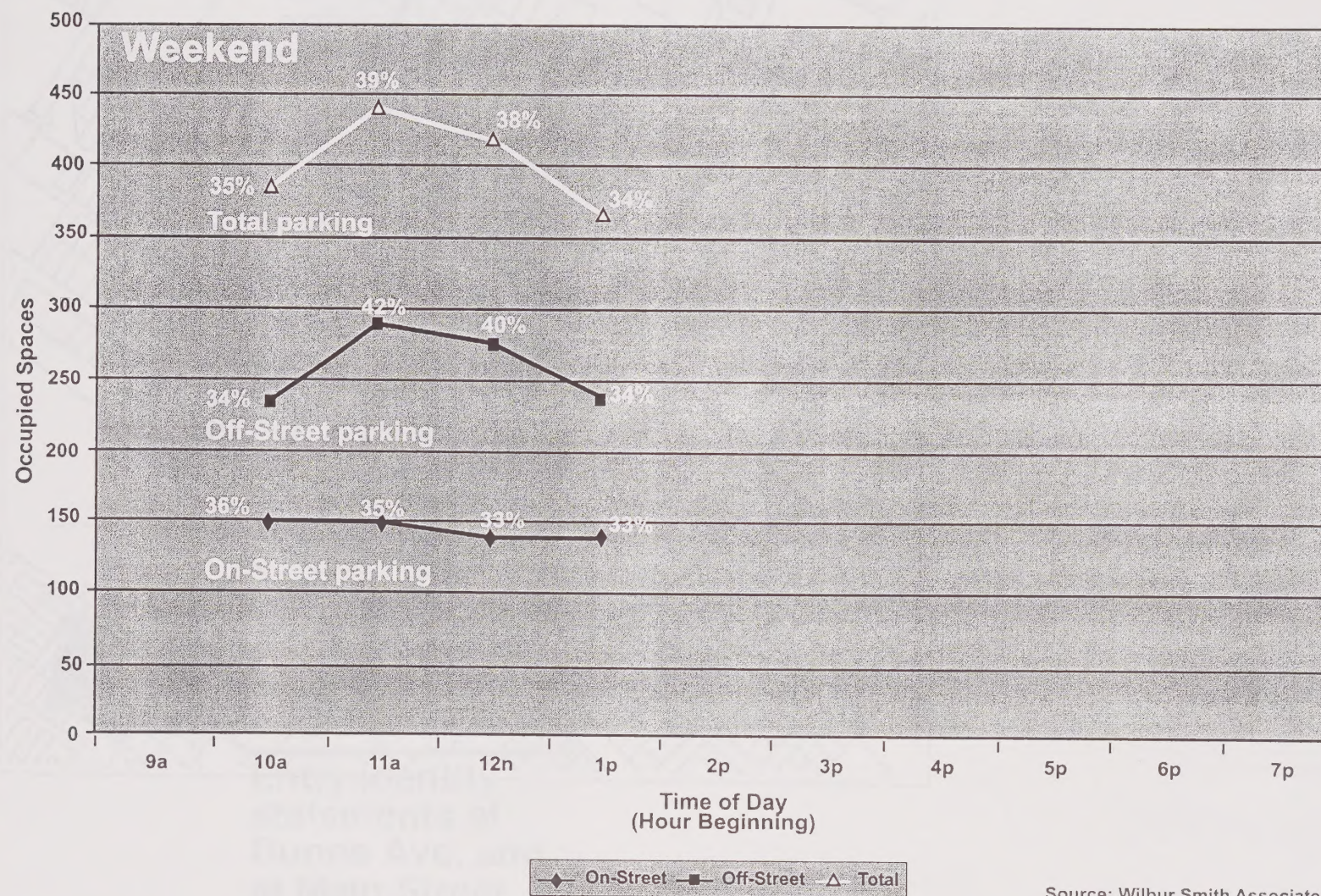
Garrett Toy *Director*
Joyce Maskell *Manager*
Bill Newkirk *Analyst*

CONSULTANTS

Cannon Design Group
Architects and Planners
Keyser Marston Associates
Real Estate Economists
David Gates & Associates
Landscape Architects

Weekend Parking Utilization by Hour

Total spaces available excluding commuter rail lots = 1120

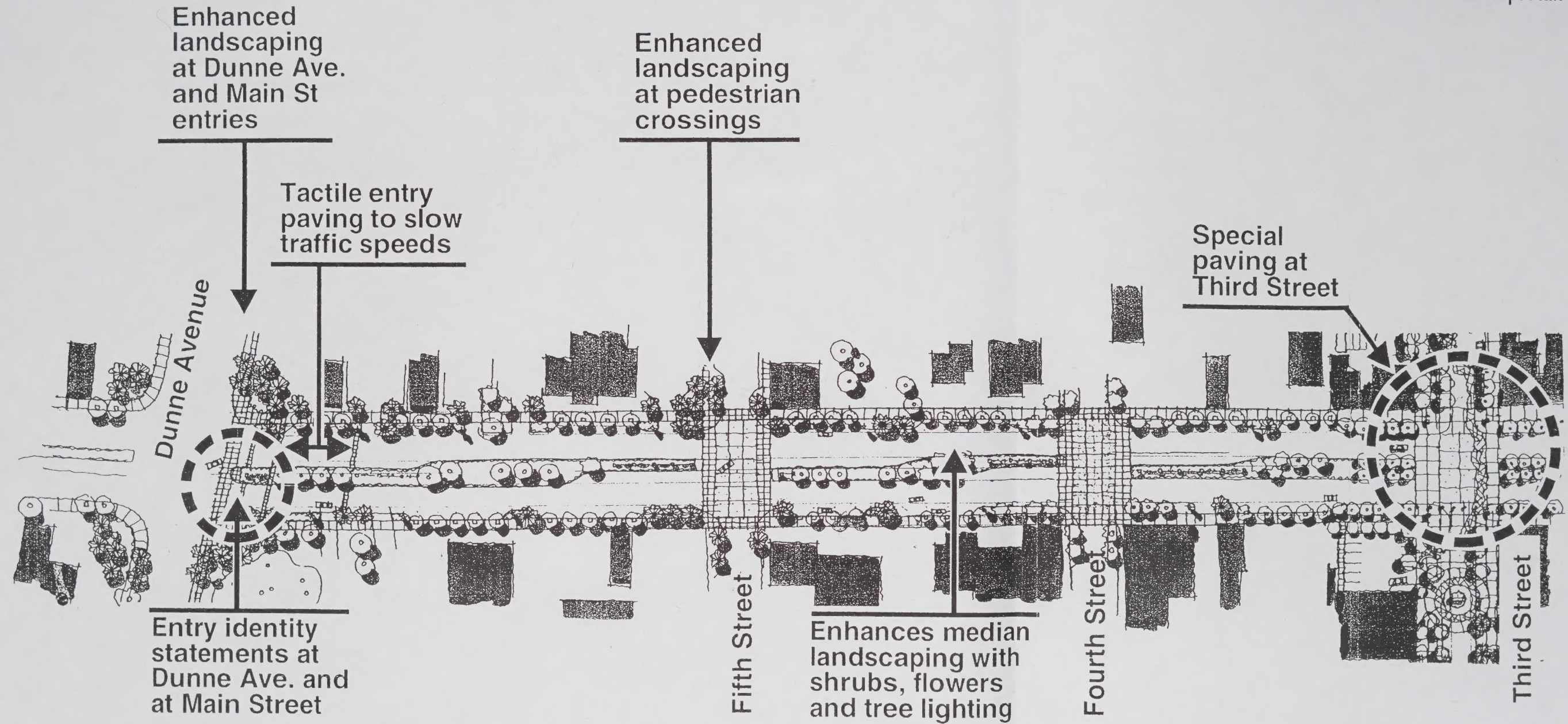


Source: Wilbur Smith Associates



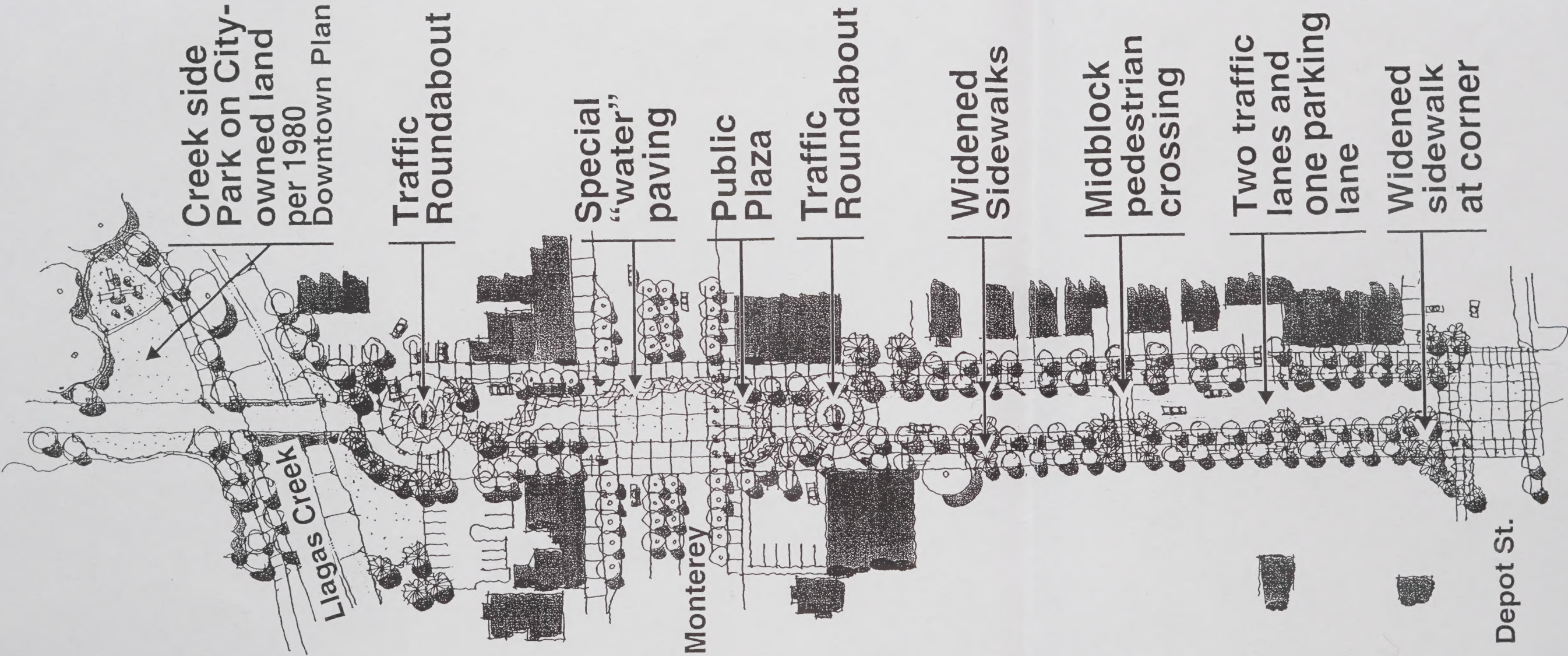
Potential Development Sites Key

D. Monterey Road Concept Plan

Monterey Road
Concept Plan

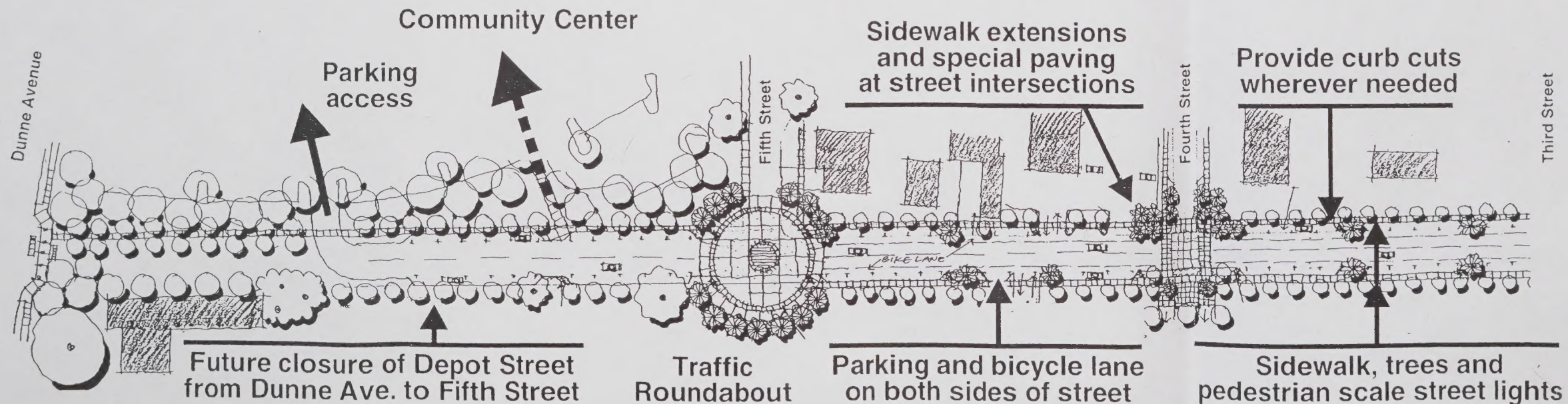
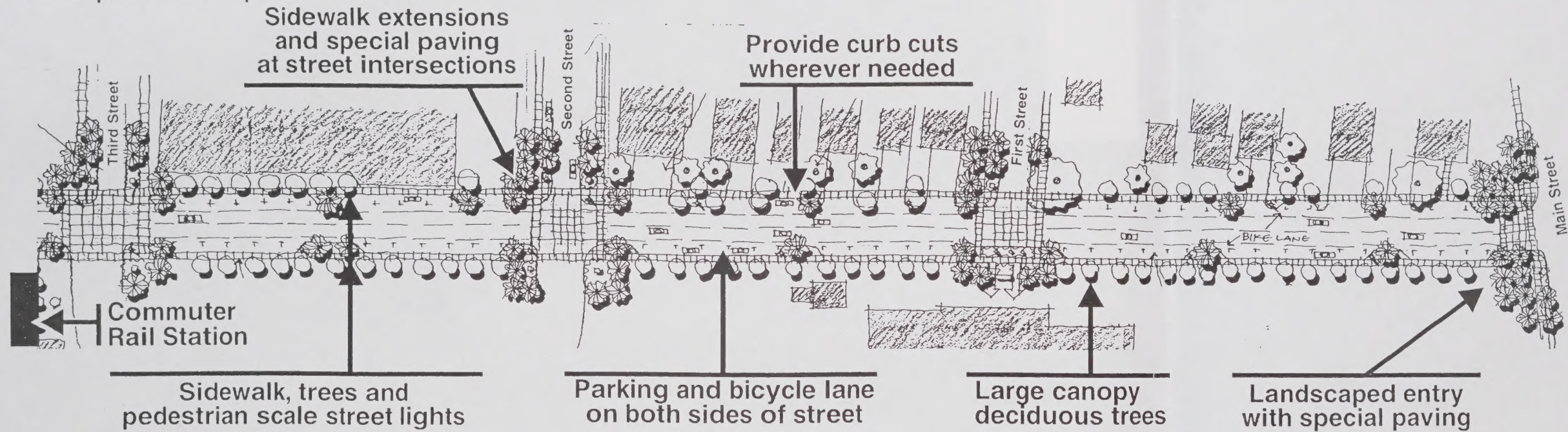
E. Third Street Concept Plan

Third Street
Concept Plan



F. Depot Street Concept Plan

Depot Street
Concept Plan





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